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Housekeepers' Chat

Thursday, June 26, 1930.

Not for Publication

Subject: "Making Jelly from Summer Fruits."

From Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A. Publications available: Mimeographed material on jelly-making. "Removing Common Stains."

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How many American women, do you suppose, still put up jams and jellies? Close to 75 per cent, or almost three-fourths, according to a recent survey. Apple jelly was found to be the favorite in farm homes, and blackberry jelly in city homes. Grape jelly and grape jam placed second in both farm and city homes.

The other day I read a good definition of jelly: "Ideal fruit jelly is a beautifully colored, transparent, palatable product, obtained by so treating fruit juice that the resulting mass will quiver, not flow, when removed from its mold; a product with texture so tender that it cuts easily with a spoon, and yet so firm that the angles thus produced retain their shape; a clear product that is neither sirupy, gummy, sticky, nor tough. This is that delicious, appetizing substance, a good fruit jelly."

Isn't that a good definition?

I asked the Recipe Lady, last week, what she thought of it.

"Very good," said she. "But don't forget, Aunt Sammy, that perfect jelly must have not only sparkling clearness and quivering tenderness of texture, but also delightful fresh fruit flavor. Jelly, to be good, must be made from the right materials," continued the Recipe Lady. "The fruit used for jelly must be neither too ripe nor too green. I find that a mixture of about equal parts of under-ripe and of ripe fruit is ideal. The under-ripe fruit gives the best texture to the jelly, and the ripe fruit the best flavor."

"Can you outline a method of extracting juice, that would work for all early summer fruits?" I asked.

"Yes. The first fruits of the season for jelly are blackberries, black raspberries, red raspberries, and currants. Juice can be extracted from berries without the addition of water. However, I often use from 1/4 to 1/2 cup of water to the pound of fruit in extracting juice from blackberries, black raspberries, and currants, because their flavor is so rich that the juice can stand a little diluting. These fruits cook very quickly. I plan on from 3 to 10 minutes for cooking, depending upon the condition of the fruit. Straining the juice is important too. Canton flannel jelly bags are best, made with the fuzzy side of the material in. A double thickness of good quality cheesecloth is also good. The jelly bag should be suspended from a wire rack or a wooden support. When the flow of juice stops, press the bag lightly, with the flat sides of two knives, to start the flow again. Any more questions?"

"Yes. How much fruit do you cook at one time?"

"Not more than 6 to 8 pounds. If I use as much as 8 pounds in one lot, I divide the juice in half, and work up each part separately. As a rule, one pound of fruit yields about one cup of juice. I work with 4 to 6 cups of juice at once, using a large flat bottom kettle for rapid boiling. I get better jelly, by working with fairly small amounts of juice. The evaporation of moisture is quicker, and the natural color and flavor of the fruit are kept in the jelly. It really takes less time, too, in the long run. More questions, Aunt Sammy?"

"Yes. After the juice is extracted from the fruit, ready to make into jelly, how much sugar do you combine with it?"

"That's an important point," said the Recipe Lady. "The amount of sugar is very important. If you don't use enough sugar, the jelly will be tough and unpalatable. If you use too much sugar, the jelly will be sirupy and runny."

"What's the correct amount?" I asked.

"To one cup of carefully extracted juice, I use from $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 cup of sugar. The mixture of juice and sugar should be cooked down rapidly, until it is so thick that it makes very heavy drops that run together before they fall from the side of a spoon. This blending of heavy drops is called sheeting off, and is the best test I know for the proper concentration of the jelly. When the jelly is done, pour it into low sterilized hot jelly glasses. Take care to pour the jelly into the middle of the glass, so that no drops stick to the sides, above the level of the jelly. Then, when the jelly has set, the hot paraffin that is poured on can make a tight seal. To insure a high, close-fitting seal, rotate the glass while the layer of paraffin is still liquid. Jelly, like all other home preserved products, should be labeled with name and date, and then stored in a cool, dry place. Do you need any more information today?"

I told the Recipe Lady I'd like to know more about strawberry and cherry jelly, for I have tasted such delicious strawberry and cherry jelly.

"So have I," said the Recipe Lady. "Strawberries and cherries require special treatment, when it comes to making them into jelly. As a rule, strawberries and cherries do not contain sufficient pectin to make jelly of a good standard, but pectin extract can be added. As a matter of fact, some strawberries do contain sufficient pectin, and will jell perfectly if one tablespoon of lemon juice is added to each cup of strawberry juice. Would you like to try a sample of my strawberry jelly?"

Of course I tried the sample --- and it was delicious. I may be prejudiced in favor of the Recipe Lady, but I can truthfully say that she is the best jelly-maker I ever knew.

If you want more information about making jelly, I'll be glad to send you a page of directions, written by the Recipe Lady.

Here's a question to answer, before we close for the day. "Please tell me how to remove fresh fruit stains from a linen table cloth."

The most common method of removing fresh fruit stains, from white or fast-colored washable material, is the boiling water method. Stretch the stained material over a bowl. Fasten it with a string, or a rubber band, if necessary. Then pour boiling water upon it, from a teakettle held at a height of 3 or 4 feet, so the water will strike the material with some force. If the fruit stain remains, after this treatment, hang the wet material in the sun to dry.

Fruit stains which will not respond to the boiling water treatment may often be bleached by the old reliable "lemon juice and sunshine" method.

Do you know there is a bulletin on "Stain Removal from Fabrics"? I haven't mentioned it recently, but there is such a bulletin, and a handy one it is to have about the place.

Friday: "Sunday Dinner with Strawberry Ice Cream."

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